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ABSTRACT

Achievement motivation research provides a basis for understanding the processes by which socialization into stereotypical feminine roles shapes the educational and vocational aspirations of adolescent women. Young women are socialized to be interested in pleasing others, motivated to achieve in traditionally feminine areas, and fearful of success relative to atypical areas of achievement. This socialization process seems to be contrary to developing personality characteristics and behaviors which are prerequisites for achieving in masculine vocational areas. Many young women make negative decisions early in life in response to perceived and internalized stereotypes affecting their achievement motivations and behaviors. Because of the nature of the socialization process, the young woman enters the exploratory stage of vocational development with strong dispositions which determine the activities and roles she chooses to explore. Vocational guidance programs need to structure the learning environment of young women to provide experiences which challenge and expand self-definitions, enabling adolescent women to develop more positive self-concepts and to seek achievement in a wider range of vocational areas. (Author/NRB)

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Achievement Motivation and the Vocational Development of Adolescent Women: A Review and Application of Achievement Motivation Research to Vocational Development Theory

In this paper I would like to provide an overview of the research pertaining to achievement motivation in women and apply this research to the framework of Donald E. Super's theory of vocational development as it relates to adolescent women. Achievement motivation research provides a basis for an understanding of the processes by which the socialization into the stereotypical feminine role serves to shape the educational and vocational strivings of adolescent women. In planning vocational development programs counselors need to be aware of these processes and the unique needs of adolescent women. Given the ambiguous values of our society in relation to the "proper" feminine role and the tendency of vocational choice toward irreversibility it can be expected that the synthesis of a vocational self-concept in young women progresses with some amount of anxiety and inner conflict. It is hoped that this paper will provide counselors with some insight into the vocational development problems of young women.

Women and Achievement Motivation

The theory of achievement motivation originally described by McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell (1953) in The Achievement Motive has been used as a framework for understanding achievement behavior in women. According to Stein and Bailey (1973), the original formulation "conceptualized achievement motivation as a relatively stable disposition to strive for success in any situation where standards of excellence are applicable, that is, as a motive that generalized across achievement areas." These authors indicate that this approach is more applicable to males than females since studies stressing intellectual and leadership abilities have not generally confirmed the existence of a motivation to achieve in females. Stein and Bailey report another model which has been proposed by Crandall and Battle. This model assumes "that motivation is specific to particular achievement areas rather than being generalized." This interpretation would allow for achievement expressions in other areas more applicable to females. In examining achievement motivation in women Faver (1979) presents the argument "that the general need to achieve remains stable across the life-cycle, while the areas in which achievement is valued and the mode of achievement may change." These views of achievement behavior become

important when considering achievement motivation in women, because it needs to be clarified that women may be motivated to achieve even when this may not be immediately apparent when focusing on specific areas such as vocational or educational achievement. With this distinction in mind, I would like to consider first, the process of the socialization of achievement behavior in women generally, and then, examine how this process affects adolescent women.

Hoffman (1972) reviewed the research as to the socialization of the achievement motive in the early years of a young girl's development. His conclusions are noted here:

> Since the little girl has (a) less encouragement for independence, (b) more parental protectiveness, (c) less cognitive and social pressure for establishing an identity seperate from the mother, and (d) less mother-child conflict which highlights this seperation, she engages in less independent exploration of her environment. As a result she does not develop skills in coping with her environment nor confidence in her ability to do so.

For these reasons Hoffman suggests that females "have higher affiliative needs and that achievement behavior is motivated by a desire to please. If their achievement behavior comes into conflict with affiliation, achievement is likely to be sacrificed or anxiety may result." Stein and Bailey (1973) would disagree with Hoffman's interpretation of achievement behavior in women. Their review of various studies supports the hypothesis "that females' achievement orientations are likely to be manifested in areas which rep-

resent culturally defined sex-appropriate activities. . . . Females set high attainment values and standards of performance in sex-appropriate areas, and these values and standards predict their effort and performance."

Both Hoffman's hypothesis and the hypothesis of Stein and Bailey, however, indicate that women are less likely to achieve or want to achieve in atypical areas. This disposition was elaborated on by Horner (1968) who identified a motive to avoid success and concluded that this motive is more readily aroused in women. Loss of femininity and self-esteem, and social rejection were cited by Horner as two possible reasons for this motive. Horner views the motive to avoid success as:

> . . . a stable characteristic of the personality acquired early in life in conjunction with sex role standards. It can be conceived of as a disposition (a) to feel uncomfortable when successful in competitive (aggressive) achievement situations because such behavior is inconsistent with one's femininity, an internal standard, and (b) to expect or become concerned about negative consequences such as social rejection following success in such situations.

The motive is seen as being more strongly aroused in women who are highly motivated to achieve. It is "more strongly aroused in achievement situations where performance reflecting 'intellectual and leadership' ability is to be evaluated against some standard of excellence and against someone else's performance than in noncompetitive situations. . . ."

In a study of this hypothesis, Horner used a verbal

lead to elicit imaginative stories for the measurement of the achievement motive. Women showed significantly more fear of success imagery and performed better in noncompetitive situations. The performance of women with low fear of success imagery was not affected by the type of competitive situation. Horner notes that "the results presented suggest that optimal performance for most women with high motive to avoid success can be obtained only if they work in achievement situations that are noncompetitive." In a later paper Horner (1972) notes that as more work has been done on her hypothesis that it has been found that "situational factors" as well as "internal personality dispositions" affect the individual woman's motive to avoid success. One of these situational factors is the attitude of significant males toward her achievement strivings. It can be expected that the more dependent personality will exhibit a greater motive to avoid success in nontraditional areas. Horner's original findings were based on a sample of 88 females tested in 1964. Alper (1974) repeated the study in 1970-71 and found similar results. She indicates, however, that fairly large variations exist in studies focusing on Horner's hypothesis; she attributes these variations to the methods used, the differences in sex-role orientations of individual groups of women, as well as, the use of a male model of achievement motivation. It is

interesting to note that Hoffman (1973, as cited by Alper) found that there has been a significant increase in avoidance of success imagery in males. Alper feels that a "reversal of attitudes is taking place with men less interested at present in becoming achievers and women being more willing to recognize that achievement may be female appropriate as well as male appropriate."

Unger (1976) takes another approach to the socialization into the feminine role and achievement motivation. She presents support for the idea that it is status inequality which is socialized in male and female children. She suggests that sex role stereotyping may more accurately be viewed as power typing; "Since this status asymetry is based upon ascribed status which is a rather permanent characteristic of individuals, it is not easily changed by the performance capabilities of the individuals involved." To provide support for this view Unger presents a study by Johnson (1974) that:

> . . . demonstrated that certain forms of power are regarded by both males and females as stereotypically male while other forms are regardes by both males and females as stereotypically female. . . . she found that legitimate power . . . expert power . . . and informational power . . . are characterized as male. In contrast, referent power (based on a need to belong to a group and to further its goals) and helpless power or the power of dependency . . . are characterized as female. When given a choice of which power to use, males chose legitimate power more often than females, and females chose helpless power significantly more often than males.

Power perceptions are related to status differentiation;

If women are ascribed and internalize this status asymetry, then how does this type of self-concept affect their expectancies of being successful in male dominated areas of achievement?

Achievement Motivation and Expectancy of Success

Atkinson (1974) hypothesizes that one of the factors influencing achievement motivation is expectancy or probability of success on a task. Frieze (1975) notes that "numerous studies have documented that higher expectancies for personal success are held by men and boys than by women and girls." Lower expectancies for success seem to be indicative of a basic lack of self-confidence in the individual woman's personality; this is not surprising considering the nature of the feminine sex-role stereotype and the differential valuing of male attributes in relation to female attributes. Broverman and her associates (1972) indicate that:

> Numerous investigators have noted the existence of sex-role stereotypes, i.e., consensual beliefs about the differing characteristics of men and women. . . . Despite the apparent fluidity of sex-role definition in contemporary society as contrasted with previous decades, our own findings to date confirm the existence of pervasive and persistent stereotypes.

Using a sex-role questionnaire with a wide variety of people, Broverman and her associates found a high concensus as to

what are presumed to be differing characteristics of men and women. Furthermore, "the masculine poles of the various items were more often considered to be socially desirable than the feminine poles. This differential valuation of sex-related characteristics was observed in several different studies." When factor analyses were performed on the responses in both a sample of men and women it was observed that the responses could be grouped into male-valued and female-valued items. The male-valued items were related to various competencies:

> Included in this cluster are attributes such as being independent, objective, active, competitive, logical, skilled in business, worldly, adventurous, able to make decisions easily, self-confident, always acting as a leader, ambitious. A relative absence of these traits characterizes the stereotypic perception of women; that is relative to men, women are perceived to be dependent, subjective, passive, noncompetitive, illogical etc.

The Broverman studies are representative of various similar studies which have found that characteristics related to the masculine are more positively perceived than characteristics related to the feminine stereotype. If these attitudes can be related to our society as a whole, then it can be expected that the developing self-concepts of young girls will tend to incorporate these subtle messages. This learning process will result in a rating of self as not having as much ability as a male, particlarly in vocational and educational areas which are dominated

by males. Only by consistent effort will the individual woman expect to perform equally as well as a male.

Achievement Motivation and Causal Attributions of Success and Failure

Because women often lack confidence in their abilities, it can be expected that they tend to make different causal attributions for their successes and failures. Frieze (1975) reports that "within the achievement domain, the causal attributions one makes have implications for one's expectations, degree of pride, and shame experienced and future behavior undertaken. . . . " In reviewing studies related to attribution of success, Frieze notes that women tend to attribute success more often to unstable external factors such as luck or unstable internal factors such as effort. Unstable and external factors do not provide for a consistent expectancy for succeeding in atypical achievement areas. Furthermore, attribution of success to these factors is reinforced by the attitudes taken by others as to the reasons for being successful on a task. Unger (1975) cites a series of studies which "demonstrated that under identical circumstances, when engaged in identical behaviors, males and females are perceived differently. . . . Good performance by a male on a masculine task was likely to be attributed to skill while the same performance by a female was more likely to be seen as having been influenced by luck."

This differentiation did not hold for feminine tasks. What is surprising is that both men and women saw males as being more skillful regardless of the nature of the task. Unger writes that "if similar processes occur outside the experimental paradigm, then the potential discrimination against women . . . may be of a more subtle nature and hence less easily eliminated by objective evidence of good performance."

The causal attributions women make as to their successes seem to be indicative, therefore, of a general lack of confidence in the abilities of women. O'Leary (1977), however, would question this interpretation. She indicates that since women have a "fear of success" that their interpretations of the reasons for success may be a "learned tactic to avoid the negative consequences associated with success." This brings to mind a study reported by Paver (1979) on a reassessment of the concept of the motive to avoid success which "suggests that what has been identified is not a motive but rather a realistic attitude reflecting knowledge of the consequences of deviation from sex-role prescriptions." If women have a realistic perception that they will be socially penalized or that they will lose a sense of their own femininity in achieving in "masculine areas", one method to avoid conflict is to attribute success to effort or luck. This tendency to attribute success to

external factors may also be due to realistic perceptions of power relationships (Unger, 1976).

Attribution theory also encompasses the causal interpretations of failure on a task. Frieze (1975) thinks that "considering the generally low expectancies of women, it is plausible to predict that women would also be likely to attribute failures to lack of ability." Furthermore, Frieze notes that "if ability is a stable characteristic, this attributional pattern indicates that these women are unmotivated to reattempt tasks they had failed." This author also indicates that other research has shown that women may also attribute failure to the external cause of bad luck.

The attribution of failure to a lack of ability could be used to support the hypothesis that women are sensitive to and have a fear of failure, since failure reinforces a sense of helplessness. Achievement behavior is interpreted as being determined by a tendency to achieve and also a tendency to avoid failure (Atkinson, 1975). Stein and Bailey (1973) report that "it appears that females are more anxious about failure in academic situations than males and that their anxiety levels increase during the elementary years more than males. Females score higher than males on questionnaire measures of test anxiety". . . . This tendency to score higher on measures of test anxiety has been used in research on women to indicate degree of fear of failure.

However, Veroff, McClelland, and Ruhland (1975) question this approach since females feel more comfortable about reporting anxiety than males. These authors found support for a contention that women actually have less fear of failure than males and they think that this finding is probably descriptive of "the deeper dispositional orientations of the two sexes."

Summary

Up to this point this paper has dealt with achievement motivation in relation to women generally. I have indicated that women seem to be socialized: to be interested in pleasing others, to be motivated to achieve in "feminine" areas, and to have a fear of success relative to atypical areas of achievement; Women may also have a tendency to devalue feminine traits and to feel that they are less capable as well as less powerful than males. The nature of the socialization of women, therefore, seems to be contrary to developing personality characteristics and behaviors which are prerequisites for achieving in "masculine" vocational areas. This view provides some explanation as to the disproportionate amount of women in occupational areas and levels dominated by males. I would like to focus next on how this socialization process manifests itself in the achievement strivings of the adolescent woman and the

ultimate effect on her vocational development.

Achievement Motivation and the Vocational Development of the Adolescent Woman

Stein and Bailey (1973) cite research which indicates that "children learn cultural sex-role definitions of achievement areas by early elementary school, and these are well ingrained by adolescence." Vetter (1973) reports a study (Harmon, 1971) which found that freshman women perceived their pre-adolescent vocational choices as shifting from more demanding atypical occupations to more typical female occupations: this same study found that women had considered a very restricted range of occupations during adolescence. O'Leary (1977) cites a study which indicates that while there are no significant differences between girls and boys in achievement and grades in math at the end of the first year in high school by the second year the number of girls taking math declines; the girls felt that taking math might interfere with social relationships, was less useful to girls and would make them feel masculine. Farmer (1976) summarized a paper which found "that girls perform as well as boys in math, science, and tests of spatial relations, thereafter their performance becomes increasingly poorer." McEwen (1975) in her review of the research on counseling women includes the findings of a

study of 1577 adolescents which indicated that vocational and educational plans of young women tended "to stabilize in the later high school years in the direction of lower educational aspirations than those reported by boys." Bardwick's view (1971) of the motivations of adolescent women implies that they are least prepared to make vocational choices during this period as their tendency to achieve becomes linked to pleasing others. Crites (1969) indicates that the choice process may be viewed as involving a series of negative decisions; In regard to young women it seems negative decisions are made quite early in life in response to a perceived and internalized stereotype affecting the achievement motivations and behaviors of young women.

These studies all seem to indicate that there is a shifting in vocational and educational aspirations of young women to more feminine areas of achievement. These young women are in the exploratory stage of vocational development as defined by Super (1957). In this stage of vocational development the adolescent is involved in "the process of trying out various modes of adult behavior and of ascertaining which of these are congenial to one's self and acceptable to one's associates. In Super's view this exploratory process occurs in the home, school, and work environments and serves to clarify various impressions of self for the individual as well as provides opportunities to

learn about the nature of various occupations. This learning or "synthesizing" process "often takes place without verbalization, without full awareness on the part of the individual of what is taking place within himself and between himself and the environment."

Because of the nature of the socialization process, the young woman enters the exploratory stage of vocational development with strong dispositions which determine the activities and roles she chooses to explore. She is motivated to achieve in "feminine" areas, one of the most important being the area of social skills (Stein and Bailey, 1973). The young woman is likely to have a "fear of success" when confronted with achieving in atypical areas such as math or science; She feels a sense of control in imitating and identifying with roles which are congruent to her definition of femininity; She feels uncomfortable in competition with males and does not feel she has the ability to do well relative to males. Thus she moves toward integrating a self in response to a learned and internalized definition of femininity and excludes a wide variety of occupational fields which are not congruent with her perceptions of self. She chooses activities and develops interests and aptitudes related to feminine appropriate occupational fields.

This synthesis may be hampered by a growing awareness of the relative nature of personal definitions of femininity

and the instability of social norms in relation to the feminine role. Wilson (1975) suggests that "during a period marked by rapid changes in social norms and values, given the developmental nature of the career-choice process and its tendency toward irreversibility, young women frequently may find that changing role perceptions are in conflict with their personal career orientations and plans for the future." This attitude can be expanded to include the idea that as social norms are changing women socialized into a feminine mode of behavior while desiring to expand their perceptions of themselves feel that they do not have the aptitude nor the appropriate behaviors to do so.

Therefore, during the exploratory stage role conflict may inhibit the process of synthesizing a vocational self-concept. One indication that adolescent women have difficulty in synthesizing a vocational self-concept is the finding of a study reported by McEwen (1975) which found "that women's career choices show great instability between the 12th grade and the five-year period after high school." Also it has been noted by Farmer (1976) that other researchers have suggested "that women's vocational interests may crystallize somewhat later and be organized in a different way." It can be interpreted that for young women the process of synthesizing a vocational self-concept loses momentum during adolescence as the young woman attempts to deal with this role conflict. Typically, women deal with

this conflict by seeking to achieve in feminine areas. The vocational development process, therefore, while being marked by anxiety and inner conflict for many young women, is not significantly affected by this emotional turmoil since the young woman's eventual statement of a vocational choice tends to remain congruent with her feminine role perceptions.

Vocational Guidance for the Adolescent Woman

In this paper I have focused on how the socialization into the stereotypic feminine role affects the achievement behavior of women; I have also indicated how this process has implications for the vocational development of adolescent women and is expressed in vocational development terms. In planning vocational development programs counselors need to develop strategies based on the vocational needs of young women. These strategies should be consistent with counseling approaches which encourage growth toward autonomy and self-responsibility. As young women are expected to be self-determining and as they are perceived and treated as having the ability to make their own decisions, they begin to discover and develop personal resources.

One counseling model developed by Knefelkamp, Widick, and Stroad (1976) describes the stages which can be used to categorize the personal growth of the young woman as she

moves from a rigid definition of the feminine role to a perception of the feminine role as not being bound by absolutes but defined by the individual woman's experiences. This counseling model implies that one of the most important needs of young women is the need to develop an autonomous feminine identity encompassing a tolerance for the existence of multiple feminine roles and lifestyles. Growth toward autonomy implies also a growth in self-awareness; Young women need to have opportunities for experiences in self-appraisal, decision-making, and consciousness raising. To develop vocationally young women must not only become more self-aware but also they need to be exposed to a variety of feminine role models and to experience various vocational settings.

The vocational guidance problem, therefore, is to structure the learning environment of young women so as to provide various experiences which challenge and expand young women's self-definitions. As part of this structuring an effort should be made to make school personnel aware of their personal definitions of feminine appropriate behavior and the effect of their perceptions on the achievement expressions of young women. As young women are given the room to develop personally and to widen their perspectives of what it means to be feminine, it can be anticipated that they will develop more positive self-concepts and seek to achieve in a wider range of vocational areas.

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